

The History and Mediatization of the Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales in American Culture

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Oral Tradition

- Uses verbal language to define characters and stereotypes
- Does not define place and time period
- Serves primarily didactic and community-building functions, but also for entertainment
- Communal focus (public tellings, interactive songs, etc.)
- Tellings target a single community or group
- Catered to the values of the teller or the teller's community

Literary Tradition

- Uses written language to define characters and stereotypes
- Does not define place and time period
- Serves primarily a didactic function, but also for entertainment
- semi-communal or individual focus (parents reading to children or reading alone)
- Targets a larger regional audience than oral tradition
- Catered primarily to the values of bourgeois culture

Digital Media

- Uses visual imagery to define characters and stereotypes
- Sets place and time period through clothing, architecture, geographical setting, etc.
- Serves primarily entertainment purposes, but also as a didactic function
- Individual focus (individuals watching the same film)
- Targets a more global audience
- Caters to a more general, universal set of values



Grimms' Rapunzel: a Case Study



1812 Edition

- Rapunzel's parents trade her to Frau Gothel for rapunzel, a type of German culinary salad, after Rapunzel's father is caught stealing the lettuce
- Rapunzel conceives children out of wedlock
- Frau Gothel learns of Rapunzel's pregnancy when Rapunzel asks why her clothes do not fit anymore
- Birth of twins is closer to the narrative present
- Frau Gothel is a "Fee," or "fairy"
- Rapunzel is banished from the tower to live in wretchedness
- Rapunzel restores the Prince's sight, enabling the happy ending



1857 Edition

- Rapunzel's parents trade her to Frau Gothel for rapunzel after Rapunzel's father is caught stealing the lettuce
- Rapunzel accepts the Prince's hand in marriage before conceiving
- Frau Gothel learns of Rapunzel's pregnancy when Rapunzel asks why she is harder to pull up than the Prince
- Birth of twins is farther in the narrative past
- Frau Gothel is a "Zauberin," either "sorceress" or "enchantress"
- Rapunzel is banished from the tower to live in wretchedness
- Rapunzel restores the Prince's sight, enabling the happy ending



Disney's Tangled

- Mother Gothel steals Rapunzel from the King and Queen to keep the magic of the golden flower for herself
- Rapunzel marries Flynn, a thief, at the palace
- Mother Gothel learns of Rapunzel's escape with Flynn only after the fact
- No implication of pregnancy or birth
- Mother Gothel has no magic of her own and is characterized as vain, selfish, and cruel
- Rapunzel escapes from the tower, only to return to the palace
- Rapunzel revives Flynn, but Flynn ultimately enables the happy ending by cutting Rapunzel's hair to thwart Mother Gothel

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GRIMM SERIES

- James Addison kidnaps Holly Clark (Rapunzel), who is unknowingly a Blutbad (a werewolf Wesen), after she bites him
- Holly is returned to her adoptive mother
- Holly's case reopens upon a DNA match from the crime scene where she killed an armed drug dealer
- No themes of eroticism or birth
- Detective Nick Burkhardt possesses supernatural powers to see the true nature of Wesen
- Holly is rescued from her wilderness tower (tree house) by Nick and returns to civilization
- Nick saves Holly, but Holly proves Addison's guilt and achieves justice

